

News from the Wyoming Department of Health

Thursday, April 16, 2009

Department to Parents: Keep Up on Vaccinations for Kids

National Infant Immunization Week is April 25-May 2

With disease-protecting vaccines being offered at virtually no cost to Wyoming's kids, parents are being encouraged by the Wyoming Department of Health to make sure their children are up-to-date on immunizations.

"Infants are particularly vulnerable to infectious diseases, and that is why it is critical to protect them by following the recommended vaccine schedule for children from the start," said Dr. Brent Sherard, Wyoming Department of Health director and state health officer. Sherard noted the initial dose of hepatitis b vaccine is typically given within the first day of life.

In Wyoming, the Wyoming Vaccinates Important People (WyVIP) program provides vaccines at no cost to resident families at nearly 130 participating healthcare provider offices. Children are eligible for the free vaccines from birth until the day before the 19th birthday. While providers may charge a small administrative fee (less than \$15), the cost of the vaccine is covered by a combination of state and federal funding.

More than 200,000 vaccine doses were administered overall through WyVIP in 2008, which is up from just over 183,000 total doses in 2007.

Andrea Clement-Johnson, education and partnerships coordinator with the Wyoming Department of Health immunization section, attributes the increase in doses administered to positive reception from providers since the WyVIP program was established just a few years ago. "They are really responding to the opportunity to offer vaccines at no cost to their pediatric patients," she said. "Enhanced education and outreach about the program, the efforts of immunization 'champions,' and more proactive messaging about the protective benefits of immunization have also likely played a role in the increase."

Sherard emphasized that immunizations are safe because they are thoroughly tested and their use is monitored carefully by doctors, researchers and public health officials.

"Because vaccines have been so successful in preventing disease in our country, some parents may be unaware their children could still be at risk," Sherard said. "The threats are still out there and we must keep up our efforts to educate families about the continue need for immunization."

For more information about the WyVIP program and for general information about immunizations, please visit www.immunizewyoming.com.

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